

CBC BUDGETARY PRIORITIES

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Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to debate the budget, and as we have already begun to debate, it is a budget that in many instances and in many ways spells gloom and doom for people who have been expecting and looking for some opportunity to move our government and our country forward.

In order to really understand how we got to where we are, I think it is important for us to remember that President Clinton left President Bush with a 10-year projected surplus of \$5.6 trillion in 2001.

Whereas President Bush on January 20, 2009, left President Obama with a \$1.2 trillion deficit. And let's keep in mind that this was the deficit on day one of the Obama administration, weeks before the President enacted a single piece of legislation and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The failed economic policies of the Bush administration led to this enormous deficit: the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts totaled \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, in which most of the tax relief went to the top 1 percent of income earners; a Medicare prescription drug benefit with a 10 year cost of nearly another \$1 trillion that was not offset; two overseas war that are near a cost of \$1 trillion; a \$700 billion bailout of Wall Street banks.

And all of these unpaid-for policies were compounded by the worst economic recession in 70 years that began in 2007, which led to huge shortfalls in Federal tax revenue and increased reliance on unemployment insurance and other Federal social safety net programs.

In order to get these huge deficits under control, we have some tough decisions to make. We have some very serious and some difficult decisions as we attempt to balance the budget and as we attempt to continue to promote and project economic recovery.

I have always been told that you can measure the greatness of a society by how well it looks after its young, how well it looks after its old, and how well it looks after those who cannot look after

themselves effectively. So as we begin to talk about cuts, where I come from, I have been told that if all that you do is cut, cut, cut, all that you are going to get is blood, blood, blood; and, of course, the blood of the people will be on the hands of those who have the knives.

So as we cut, let's look seriously at the Community Services Administration, the one little program, one little agency, one little area that still provides resources to fund programs like those established during the OEO War on Poverty days, when we took a good look at poverty and what was causing it.

As we begin to cut, let's understand that health is essential for wealth, so let's make sure that we don't tamper with what I consider to be one of the most effective ways of providing primary health care to large numbers of poor people in this country, the community health centers, that provide primary care to more than 20 million low-income Americans without regard in many instances to their ability to pay.

And let's understand that our prison system has become the largest in the world. More than 2 million people are incarcerated, so let's not cut or decimate the little justice programs that we are funding to help these individuals try and successfully reintegrate back into society.

So, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I urge that when we cut, let's make good cuts, and not those that cut the poor.

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How much longer can we afford to extend the Bush-era tax cuts? The President and Congress extended all of them through 2012 at a two year cost of \$800 billion. A ten year extension of all these tax cuts will cost \$3.8 trillion--\$3 trillion of which are the popular middle-class tax cuts.

Earlier this week, the Congressional Budget Office released its latest projections of the Social Security Trust Fund. It was previously projected to go into a cash deficit in 2017, but now CBO has projected that the trust fund is now running a deficit. The trust is expected to be exhausted in 2037.

We can no longer operate under the assumption of the last decade, that we can increase spending and reduce taxes without having to pay for it.

The last Congress took important steps to restore some important tools that were used to produce the first budget surplus in more than a generation in the late 1990s, such as Statutory Pay-As-You-Go--meaning if Congress wants to increase mandatory spending, we have to offset it by reducing spending elsewhere in the budget or increase taxes to cover the increase.

Unfortunately, the new Republican Majority has changed House rules gutting PAY-GO's effectiveness in the Congressional budget process. The so-called CUT-GO rule prohibits offsetting any new mandatory spending with a revenue increase. This makes it nearly impossible to offset any new spending or tax cuts with revenue increases and will require only spending cuts.

In another unprecedented change, the House last week voted to give the House Budget Committee Chairman the sole responsibility for setting discretionary spending levels for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011. The House of Representatives as a whole will be deprived of the right to vote up or down the Budget Chairman's levels.

We have to remember that what we do with Federal budget touches everyone. Our fiscal problems are very complex and they need to be addressed, but there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution.

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